United Nations

Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ General Assembly, beginning forty-ninth session, elects Amara Essy (Côte d'Ivoire) as President.

+ Secretary-General expresses regret at resignation of Dante Caputo as Special Envoy for Haiti.

+ Secretary-General welcomes General Assembly's establishment of MINUGUA; Mission Director Leonardo Franco arrives in Guatemala with advance team.

+ Under-Secretary-General Annan and General Baril visit UNAMIR contingents in Rwanda; UNOMUR formally terminated.

+ Special Representative Akashi and UNPROFOR Force Commander meet with Contact Group on former Yugoslavia in Zagreb.

+ Member States owe United Nations $2.77 billion as of 15 September; $824 million owed to regular budget and $1.95 billion to peace-keeping.

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The General Assembly today began its forty-ninth session by electing Amara Essy (Côte d'Ivoire) as President by acclamation. In his address, Mr. Essy called for a reaffirmation of the fundamental principles which inspired the establishment of the United Nations in 1945. The Assembly must gauge the expectations, hopes and needs of the world's peoples and provide answers to complex and interrelated challenges.

The new President noted that the world had been plagued by civil wars since the end of the cold war. Out of 82 conflicts in recent years, 79 had been internal ones. Conflicts in the former Yugosalavia and Rwanda had led to ethnic cleansing and even genocide, while intolerance and xenophobia had risen elsewhere. The world also had to cope with such problems as environmental degradation, urban violence, drugs, unemployment, famine and uncontrolled

(more)

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population growth. However, he continued, there were also grounds for optimism, citing recent developments in the Middle East, South Africa, Northern Ireland and Haiti.

Mr. Essy stressed the importance of the United Nations role in promoting sustainable development. Many developing countries were burdened with heavy debt repayments, while other countries were experiencing donor fatigue. Despite negative images of Africa, the crisis of the past decade could be reversed. The continent was regaining its confidence, and its leaders were reaffirming their responsibility for their people. The international community should not yield to disenchantment, but should help Africans design their own solutions to their problems.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has expressed deep regret at the resignation of Dante Caputo as Special Envoy for Haiti. In accepting Mr. Caputo's resignation yesterday, the Secretary-General paid tribute to the courage and devotion which he had shown while carrying out his duties.

A United Nations spokesman today said that finding a replacement for Mr. Caputo was a very high priority for the Secretary-General. He noted that the Special Envoy oversaw both the United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH) and the International Civilian Mission to Haiti (MICIVIH).

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has welcomed the General Assembly's establishment yesterday of the Mission for the Verification of Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA). He stressed that the Guatemalan parties should heed the Assembly's call for a vigorous process of negotiation, as accepted in the Framework Agreement on a Timetable for the Negotiation of a Firm and Lasting Peace in Guatemala. Human rights verification must be set in the context of wider efforts to end the conflict and to promote the rule of law through the negotiating process, under United Nations auspices.

The Secretary-General appointed Leonardo Franco as Director of the Mission. Mr. Franco, an Argentinian national, is currently the Director of International Protection in the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). He will head an advance team arriving in Guatemala today.

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The Under-Secretary-General for Peace-keeping Operations, Kofi Annan, and the Secretary-General's Military Adviser, General Maurice Baril, today visited peace-keepers serving with the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR). A United Nations spokesman said they also consulted with representatives of non-governmental organizations regarding the situation of Rwandan refugee camps in Zaire.

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Mr. Annan and General Baril also attended a ceremony in Uganda marking the conclusion of the United Nations Observer Mission Uganda-Rwanda (UNOMUR), which was established last June.

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The Contact Group on the former Yugoslavia today met in Zagreb for the first time, according to a United Nations spokesman. The Group had talks with Special Representative Yasushi Akashi and the Commander of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), General Bertrand de Lapresle. It was due to meet with Croatian President Franjo Tudjman this evening, and with Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic in Belgrade tomorrow.

The UNPROFOR Commander in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Lieutenant-General Michael Rose, and UNPROFOR civilian official Victor Andreev travelled to Pale today for talks with Bosnian Serb leaders. They discussed the restoration of utilities in Sarajevo and the heavy fighting in the northern part of the city over the weekend. More cease-fire violations were reported there today, and there was heavy military activity elsewhere in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including Bihac.

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As of 15 September, Member States owed the United Nations a total of $2.77 billion, according to the latest update on the Organization's financial situation. Of that amount, $824 million was for assessments for the regular budget and $1.95 billion was for peace-keeping operations.

The United States -- the largest debtor -- owed $531 million to the regular budget. It owed $644 million in peace-keeping contributions, having made a payment of $335 million on 1 September. The Russian Federation owed $28 million to the regular budget and $569 million to peace-keeping.

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